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## The Concept of Employers Brand-the Case of Heineken

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### Abstract

Organizational managers and the academic community have converged in recent years in recognizing human capital as a valuable resource at the base of operating in markets that are increasingly based on knowledge and skills. This perspective has been reinforced by the rapid development of organizational competition, at the level of locating, attracting and maintaining the appropriate labor force. Competition between organizations, known as the 'war for talent', has become a central issue in strategic human resource management and has been argued to be increasingly intense. The reason behind, may be that jobs are becoming more and more complex, while achieving high levels of organizational performance requires more and more innovative solutions to problems that depend on highly skilled and quality workers. Organizations should develop processes to enhance understanding of the behaviors and attitudes of talented employees (potential and existing). These should keep pace with contemporary social and demographic trends and the strengthening of the labor force migration phenomenon. The concept of employer brand, on the one hand, has to do with attracting strong talent, but equally important is the attraction and retention of the right employees, in the right conditions, contexts and constraints. This article dealt with the concept of employer brand, having as research objective the thorough study of the concept, analyzing the Heineken organization based on the case study technique. The organization was chosen as it is a prime example of employer branding, which can provide valuable lessons for today's organizations.

**Keywords:** employer brand, Heineken, work experience, concept, organizational outcomes.

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### 1. Introduction

Organizational managers and the academic community have converged in recent years in recognizing human capital as a valuable resource (perhaps the most valuable), at the basis of organizational operating in markets that are increasingly based on knowledge and skills (Slavkovic et al., 2019; Dickson, Noveski & Hamidi, 2011).

This perspective has been reinforced by the rapid development of organizational competition, at the level of locating, attracting and maintaining the appropriate humancapital (Vaiman, Scullion & Collings, 2012).

Competition between organizations, known as the 'war for talent', has become a central issue in strategic human resource management and has been argued to be increasingly intense. The reason behind this phenomenon, may be that jobs are becoming increasingly complex, while achieving high levels of organizational performance requires increasingly applying innovative solutions to problems that depend on highly skilled and quality workers (Roy, 2008). Research

has shown that "high quality/talented" candidates tend not to always follow the dictates and norms of the labor market.

For example, they may change employers frequently, as they may be very strict in terms of personal work requirements. Therefore, organizations should develop processes to enhance the understanding of the behavior and attitudes of talented employees (potential and existing). These should keep pace with contemporary social and demographic trends and the strengthening of the labor force migration phenomenon (Minchington, 2011; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Organizations, however, probably do not always need to attract the most "strong talents in their field", but those talents who will tend to align with the organizational philosophy and contribute fruitfully to the achievement of organizational goals and the development of knowledge. In fact, the concept of talent management has received a lot of criticism, as it may not necessarily have a clear definition, while it may contradict the philosophy of strategic HRM (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). The concept of employer brand, on the one hand, has to do with attracting strong talent, but equally important is the attraction and retention of the right employees, in the right conditions, contexts and constraints.

Many authors have emphasized that employer brand building has become an important strategic tool to identify, attract and retain competent employees from the labor market, since individuals wish to work in organizations that maintain a good image and a positive reputation. (Bakanauskiene, Bendaravičienė & Barkauskė, 2017). In addition, employees tend to want to be employed in organizations that maintain high ethical standards and contribute to society as a whole.

In recent years, there has been a fundamental shift in the way organizations engage with talent. The prevailing view is to proactively attract the best candidates, while it has become clear that stronger employer brands tend to attract top candidates more easily.

The first-rate alignment and coexistence of the concepts of marketing and HRM (HR marketing) is a modern trend that can affect both the internal environment of an organization and the external environment (Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017). The combination of the knowledge and achievements of the above two scientific fields (marketing, through branding and HRM), may be necessary for the effective adaptation of organizations to the modern environment.

It is widely conceived, that the most important ambassadors of an employer brand are not the organizational history, the quality of products/services, etc. but the workers themselves (Edwards & Edwards, 2013). Employees' comments to other people can be extremely influential, both at the employer level and the overall brand image. It is easy to understand how important it is for a client or potential employee to learn "first-hand" about the quality of an organization's management, its culture, or the practices it adopts internally. Employees acting outwardly and positively can be extremely important. They may speak directly or indirectly about the organization they work for: they may or may not, recommend the organization's products and services to their friends and family, present their company as a suitable employer to others, etc. Their views are widely seen, as the opinions of an expert.

It is important to understand that this initial information may be communicated in unpredictable ways to unfamiliar audiences and groups of individuals and potential employees. For example,

a social media video of an employee exhibiting negative work behaviors can cause significant damage to the organizational reputation. These are central elements that an employer should be concerned with, when there is a shortage of talented workers with sufficient abilities (Elving et al., 2012). Minchington (2016) highlighted that any organization can engage in the above at various levels. The top level is where all managers are trained in employer branding and are aware of the fact that any action they take at the decision-making level will have an impact on the employer brand.

The development of an appropriate strategy at the employer brand level, according to Minchington, (2016), must emphasize three pillars: customers, employees and the financial performance of the organization. Organizations that rely on only one of the 3 above fragments may not be able to achieve sustainable, long-term growth (Minchington, 2016; Grabara, 2013). It is also necessary to realize that the development of a positive and strong employer brand should be based on true and accurate information (Grabara, 2013). Incomplete information in the age of information and the high-end of people's interconnection, can do significant long-term damage to the credibility of organizations.

The concept of employer branding has been suggested to emphasize the appropriate communication of core organizational values so as to be perceived as an attractive employer, create the conditions to attract skilled workers, promote innovation and develop a sense of pride within the organization, for the products/services offered and the social, organizational contribution (Helm, 2011; Saini et al., 2014). The concept of branding has been used repeatedly (Neumeier, 2006; Keller, 2008), however, the term Employers brand is relatively recent. Aaker, (2003) emphasized that most individuals prefer a reputed employer compared to an unknown organization. A positive employer brand tends to enhance a positive, perceived view of stability, well-being and potential future prospects (Minchington, 2016).

Employer branding is a complex process which aims to influence all existing and potential stakeholders (Bursová, 2009; Van Mossevelde, 2014). Focusing on the concept and understanding it, can (among other things) contribute to enhancing work motivation and increasing the number of candidates for a position (Hučková, 2012; Bursová, 2009).

Wilden et al. (2010) emphasized that employer branding is a set of psychological, financial and functional benefits, which can strengthen the connection of prospective employees with their employers.

Knowing these advantages can help organizations to create an attractive and strong employer brand, contributing to the sharing of knowledge between generations of employees and increasing the likelihood of achieving a competitive advantage (Van Mossevelde 2014; Wilden et al., 2010; Urbancová et al. 2017).

The concept of employer branding is now an important addition to the toolbox of HR professionals (Barrow, 2007; Martin, 2008), while the concept is about bringing together the fields of marketing and human resource management. As branding traditionally fits to marketing it is not an obvious field of study from a human resource management perspective. Nevertheless, given its empowerment (especially at the practitioner level), the concept has become important to the academic community (CIPD, 2009) and a number of books have been published for practitioners (Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Sartain & Schumann, 2006). The concept of employer branding has been increasingly popular since the 1990s (Edwards, 2009).

A strong internal as well as a strong external branding by the organizations can help them influence the employees, provided that the employees are satisfied with the organization (Kaur & Syal, 2013). In today's era, the rapidly developing technology and the speedily changing business environment, create significant challenges for organizations. One of them has to do with attracting and retaining the right staff. The survival and success of organizations depend on the quality of their workforce and the knowledge that can be produced, as a "shield" in the ever-changing external environment.

Practitioners and academic researchers have pointed out that developing effective employer branding strategies can provide organizations with a strategic, competitive advantage (Wilden et al., 2010). Biswas & Suar, (2013) emphasized that employer branding is about managing employer-employee relationships. Organizations have gradually realized that the best way to be attractive in the labor market is to develop a strong and distinct employer brand (Gözükara, 2016).

Kaur & Syal, (2013) concluded that an effective employer brand is necessary to satisfy existing employees. Gözükara (2016) also concluded that organizations can offer development opportunities, support a creative and innovative environment, conduct social responsibility actions and provide above-average financial packages. Jain & Bhatt (2015) highlighted that effective employer branding enhances employee satisfaction and the employee's willingness to remain committed to their organization.

This article dealt with the concept of employer brand, having as research objective the thorough study of the concept, analyzing the Heineken organization based on the case study technique. The organization was chosen as it is a prime example of employer branding, which can provide valuable lessons for today's organizations.

## **2. Literature review**

Branding is a well-known and widespread field of scientific marketing, but it is somewhat new in terms of its conceptual interface with human resource management (Edwards, 2010; Kumari et al., 2020). The importance of the concept of brand image in modern product/service markets is widely recognized. What has recently been discovered is that it can also play a key role in the overall processes of recruiting, attracting and retaining staff (Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013).

The employer creates its unique brand image as an employer, communicating trust and positive attitudes to candidates. Swystun, (2007) argued that it is a mixture of characteristics, tangible and intangible, that symbolize a commercial, employer brand, which can create value and influence. Corresponding to the concept of branding in marketing, the employers' brand signals and also provides the uniqueness of the product offering and its differentiation (in regards to the work experience) (Edwards, 2010). Organizations that can deeply understand and identify the unique value of the work experience they offer can significantly influence the perceptions of prospective and potential employees.

The work experience can be differentiated in organizations - for this reason Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) emphasized that the employer brand is about organizational differentiation, as the exclusive aspects of the company's offerings or work environment are highlighted (van Reil & Balmer, 1997). Employer brand can signal the nature of employment, its advancement opportunities, challenges, and unique characteristics (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011).

Their concept of employer branding does not refer to a short-term strategy, but to the adoption of a long-term perspective, achieving innovation (Srivastava & Bhatnagpur, 2010), increasing awareness of the organization as an employer, while positively influencing the perceptions of different interest groups (Sullivan, 2004). Brands tend to create a psychological impact on individuals, as they may develop both cognitive associations and emotional bonds with them (Kapferer, 2004).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) have defined the concept as the process of creating a recognizable and inimitable employer identity. Ambler & Barrow (1996) proposed three dimensions of the concept: functional, economic and psychological. The functional aspect concerns the involvement of employees with something useful or beneficial, the economic has to do with the material rewards and benefits, while the psychological dimension deals with intangible elements, such as a sense of belonging, the fulfillment of an important purpose, satisfaction, etc. (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

According to Pop, (2008) employer brand is a combination of tangible and intangible factors such as the benefits package, culture, work environment, management involvement, etc. (Helm, 2011). As the importance of the human factor in relation to the achievement of organizational goals is constantly increasing (Saxena&Jain, 2012), the importance of a relatively new field such as HR marketing has emerged (Martin et al., 2011; Ng et al., 2010).

On the one hand, HR marketing focuses on existing employees to enhance their motivation and the likelihood of staying within the organization (Hitka et al., 2015). On the other hand, prospective employees are also a target, as it is often necessary to target a specific group in an appropriate way (Archana et al., 2014; Woźniak, 2015). In today's era, the approach that each organization will adopt in relation to the above, as well as enhancing its attractiveness as an employer, is of vital importance (Hershatte & Epstein, 2010). Something very important is that employees do not tend to wish to identify only with their work, but also with their employer. There is a tendency therefore to aggregate the characteristics of an employer and develop a relationship based on them.

Ideally, the HR marketing strategy should be aligned with all other human resource management activities. It is a basis for building deep and mutually beneficial relationships with employees (Aggerholm et al., 2011).

However, despite the growing importance of human resources, many organizations have not realized the importance of HR marketing (Kazdová, 2014). Aaker, (2003) emphasized that it is important to scrutinize the factors currently shaping the employer brand.

The benefits of HR marketing include increasing organizational competitiveness, employee engagement, the increasing of the efficiency of recruitment, selection processes, etc. (Ng et al., 2010; Saini et al., 2014).

The basic tool of HR marketing is the systematic research in relation to human resources (attitudes/perceptions, behavior, etc.), which can lead to fruitful conclusions and insights. Such information may come from both the external and internal environment of an organization. When organizations understand the importance of the concept of work experience, study it thoroughly and manage it carefully, they can achieve growths in value creation, uniqueness and impact.



In regards to competitors, organizations may be able to display and communicate appropriately the unique aspects of the employment offering or organizational environment at a perceived value level. These aspects will ideally be unique (hard to find) and will add value to the employees (on a financial, functional, psychological, semantic level, etc.). As there are many aspects and variables that make up an individual's work experience, studying the concept may not be straightforward or an easy task. Organizations can start by studying factors that cause discomfort or dissatisfaction in current or prospective candidates.

Employer Branding involves defining the unique work experience on offer, by looking at the full range of tangible and intangible rewards. In the same context, a central element is the identification and determination of the structural elements of the character of the organization. Characteristics such as the organization's core values and the guiding principles that govern how it operates as a collective entity can be of central importance at the level of differentiation.

According to Beaumont, (2003), the concept under study, includes the managing of the image of an organization, through the eyes of its associates and potential recruits. Organizations should therefore understand this perspective and "put themselves in the shoes" of their current and potential partners.

As Dell and Ainspan (2001) pointed out, the notion includes the organizational values, systems, policies and behaviors towards the objectives of attracting, motivating and retaining, existing and potential employees.

Some authors have argued that an employer branding program will encompass the unique organizational value proposition (Knox et al., 2000). It is clear that people will differ in what they experience and enjoy when working in a particular organization, but the central idea is that it is possible to "encapsulate the whole", in regards to the mean work experience.

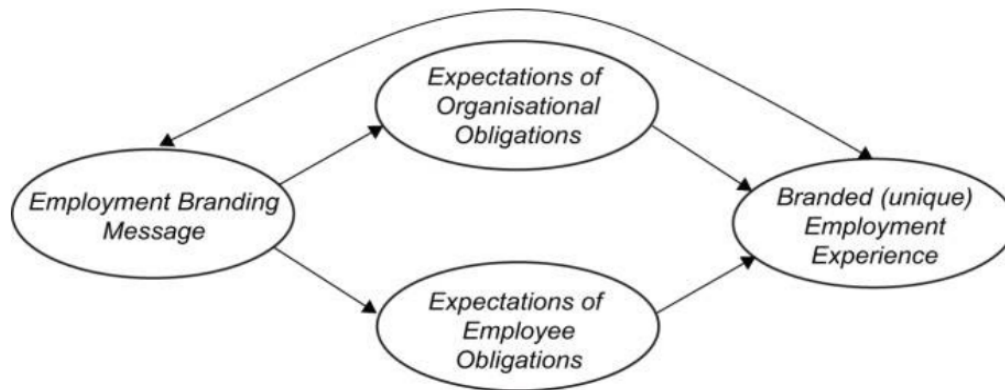
Employer branding is the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and future employees that it is a desirable place to work (Berthon et al., 2005). Employer branding campaigns tend to involve the offering of tangible and intangible aspects of employment in an organization, which also includes elements of the organization's image and identity.

However, it is very important that HR representatives and marketing specialists work together effectively so that there is a fruitful exchange of knowledge and perspectives (Chand, 2015). If employees perceive their employer brand as positive, it is likely that this will affect other employees in the wider labor market. Representatives of organizations increasingly participate in exhibitions, visit universities and develop collaborations with the academic world. In these relationships there can be significant opportunities to develop the employer brand, through relationship development (a professor's opinion for example can be influential to a student in relation to a future employer).

HR marketing is successful when employees themselves actively participate in company campaigns (Edwards & Edwards, 2013; Grabar, 2013). The active involvement of employees can improve the internal employer brand, while it can contribute decisively to strengthening the external one. However, it is necessary to continuously analyze changes in both environments (internal and external) (Aggerholm et al. 2011).

Organizations should not forget to integrate their HR marketing strategy into the organization's overall strategy and focus on employee development and content marketing. In Figure 1 below,

the psychological contract theory will be presented as a means of explaining the relationship between employer brand messages and the existence of a positive work experience.



**Figure 1. Psychological contract, employer brand and employment experience**

**Source:** Edwards, (2009)

An employer's branding activities should include the effective communication of a range of distinctive and unique work experiences enjoyed by employees in a particular organization. According to some authors (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Martin, 2008) the literature related to the concept of the psychological contract can provide relevant, important insights.

Although the contractual terms and conditions offered to employees within organizations will contribute to a distinct employment offer and experience, the concept of work experience can be extremely rich and can include many more elements than the formal aspects of a contract. Such characteristics were analyzed by Rousseau, (1989), where she defined the concept of psychological contract as the individual's beliefs about the terms and conditions in relation to a mutual exchange agreement between him and another party.

Rousseau argued that organizations will differ in what exactly they provide to employees based on what is perceived as a future promise. Organizations may signal in various ways promises and expectations regarding the future work experience of potential employees. If these subjective (to some extent) expectations are denied, resentment and a host of problems can develop.

Therefore, the concept of the psychological contract can be a useful perspective when considering what constitutes a successful employer brand and what processes are involved in its development.

Rousseau, (1990) made the distinction between relational and transactional dimensions, in the context of a psychological contract. Exchange aspects are based more on economic exchanges and differ from socio-emotionally oriented relational psychological content. For example, a potential employee may have created expectations (based on signals received from an organization) that he will work in a pleasant environment, where he will be treated fairly, management will be supportive, and he will have prospects for development and knowledge growth.

In these subjective affairs, creating subjective perceptions of trust and fairness is central. Some authors (Martin and Hetrick, 2006), have referred to the above in relation to employers branding. At this point the following can be argued in relation to the above - an employee who will not face corresponding conflicts and denials, is more likely to feel safer and be more "open" in relation to the overall work experience, in which he can learn, share, achieve, etc.

Martin and Hetrick (2006) also highlighted a third dimension of the psychological contract that can be applied to the idea of employer branding, which concerns the ideological orientation. Already, Thompson and Bunderson, (2003) emphasized that the ideological aspect includes the organization's credible commitments to achieve important principles. The overall ideology and the development of perceptions in relation to what was signaled, can be a factor that can lead employees to experience feelings of denial, indignation, dissatisfaction, etc. At this point, something mentioned above should be emphasized - a successful employer brand is based on the transmission of reliable messages and accurate information.

According to Singh, (2021), the concept under study is positively associated with work engagement, staff retention and satisfaction. Many authors have approached the concept of engagement in terms of employees' emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Bailey et al., 2017). Employee engagement is one of the internal outcomes that has been less studied by researchers in relation to the employer brand concept (Singh, 2021). Engagement is also considered an important variable at the human resource level, considering the achievement of competitive advantage. John & Raj, (2020) highlighted that employer brand can enhance job engagement. Bhasin et al. (2019) approached job engagement as a concept consisting of cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements related to the individual role of each employee.

Davies et al. (2018) defined employee engagement as the positive presence of the employees, while performing work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions, and meaningful connections with others.



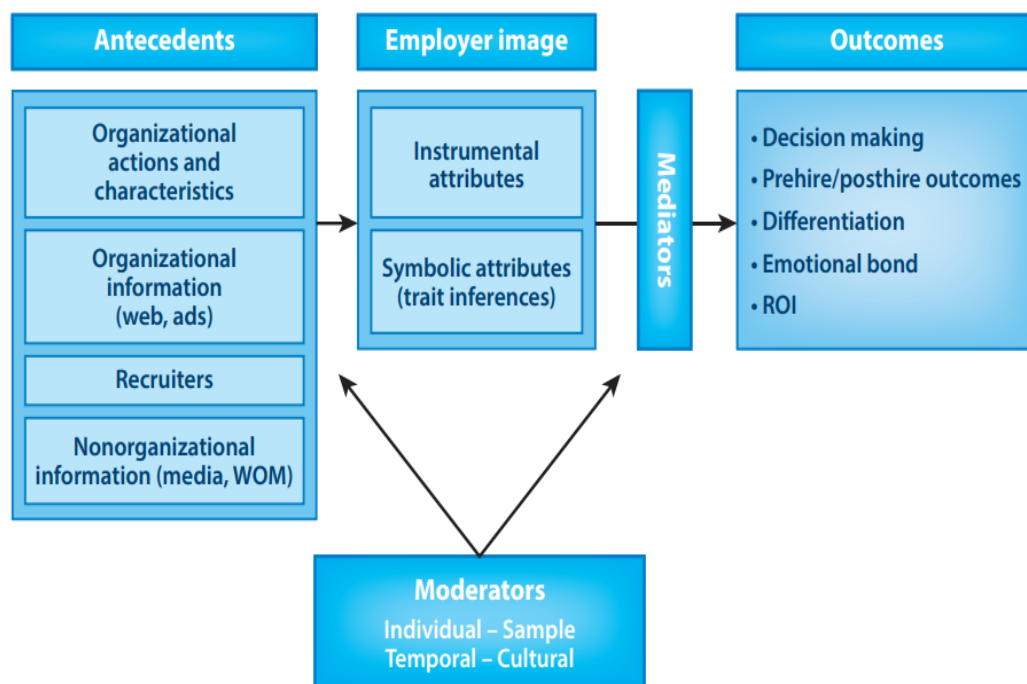
**Figure 2. Employer brand, organizational factors and outcomes**



**Source:** Aldousari et al., (2017)

According to Aldousari et al., (2017), the intermediary variables that interfere significantly in the relationship between employer brand and organizational results are: leadership (in what extent it is supportive, consistent, sets examples, etc.), the quality of internal communication (consistent, two-way, etc.), organizational inclusion of different cultures, organizational identity, management style (employee empowerment, etc.), organizational structure and consistency of brand values internally and externally.

The Figure below relates to the concept of employer image. It includes both the precursor variables and the organizational outcomes.



**Figure 3. Antecedents and outcomes of employer's image**

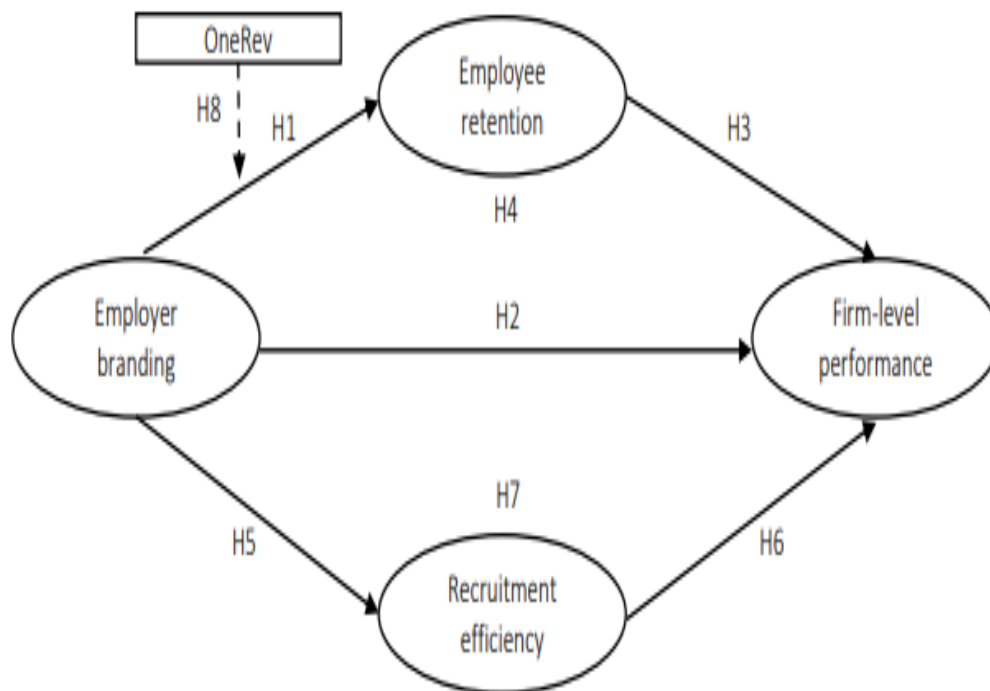
**Source:** Lievens & Slaughter, (2016)

According to Lievens & Slaughter, (2016), the concept of employer image (external dimension of the concept of employer brand) refers to the mental representations of individuals regarding to the characteristics associated with an organization as an employer, while the internal employer brand corresponds to the identity of an organization.

According to Highhouse et al. (2009) the image of an employer is a fusion of mental representations of specific aspects of an organization (as an employer) by specific individuals (the prospective employees). It may fluctuate and is highly cognitive in nature. Therefore, the internal employer brand can have more intense emotional and symbolic elements. The above distinction can be very important, as organizations may use different messages and practices depending on whether they want to strengthen the external or internal employer brand.

As can be seen above, the employer image consists of cognitive and symbolic elements, while it can influence the decision-making processes of prospective employees, the results of recruitment, possible bonds, etc. Precursor concepts refer to organizational actions and

characteristics, information communicated by organizations (internet, advertising), organizations engaged in attracting employees (recruiters) and information that is not controlled by the organization (WOM etc.).



**Figure 4. Employer branding and firm performance**

**Source:** Huseynova et al., (2022)

According to Huseynova et al., (2022) (Figure 4), the concept of employer branding can significantly influence organizational performance, through employee retention and enhancing the efficiency of the recruitment process.

### 3. Company Profile (Heineken)

In 1873, the Dutchman Gerard Adriaan Heineken started laying the foundations of the company that is today known worldwide, as Heineken. The young Gerard, proceeded to purchase a piece of land, in today's center of Amsterdam. At that point, on January 11, he created Heineken's Bierbrouwerij Maatschappij (Heineken Brewing Company) (Antoniou, 2023).

Among the elements that characterized him were perfectionism and consistency. Consequently, he followed all the quality standards required at all stages of the product's manufacturing and distribution. All these elements contributed to making his business very profitable quickly, with the public having appreciated the quality of his beer to such an extent, that Heineken quickly grew to become one of the most loved beers on the planet.

Until his death some twenty years later, Gerard Heineken continued to perfect the recipe that was to become Holland's first premium lager beer, while its name quickly became synonymous with quality, enjoyment and freshness.

The red star of Heineken on the package is a fundamental element of the identity of the brand. The corners of the red star have for hundreds of years symbolized the four ingredients that

make up its unique recipe: barley malt, hops, water and Heineken's A-Yeast. During the Middle Ages the star became an ancient symbol of brewers. Strengthening the iconic and most timeless element of the brand, the star turns into a bright, bold and modern symbol, a global trademark. As for the green bottle, it is the element through which the freshness, purity, naturalness and quality of the famous beer shine.

A century and a half have passed since the birth of Heineken, which counts hundreds of brands. Speaking with precise numbers about the sales of the famous brand, 25 million Heineken beers are served every day, in 192 countries. Gerard's descendants share the same passion, principles and values that he himself had and walked by and do not forget that the fate of Heineken was never judged by its size, but by the quality of the product itself. The commitment to quality and dedication to perfection remain alive in the family, inspiring millions of people (Antoniou, 2023)

#### **4. Research-Analysis**

Heineken developed the 'Go Places' campaign at the level of employer brand development with a focus on showcasing employee stories and raising brand awareness. The campaign included the stories of 33 employees of the organization, where staff from all levels and departments (marketing, finance, supply chain, human resources, etc.) face a difficulty that they have to manage and turn it into an opportunity.

All videos end with a question “are you ready to...turn no into yes? ready to do some miracles?”. Benjamin Clark, head of the company, emphasized that "Go Places was launched in 2016...to revitalize the brand, evolve in a slightly different direction and make some changes in approach" (Vizard, 2019). He continued, highlighting that “Heineken conducted research in 15 markets around the world to understand what the employer brand should focus on in a new campaign...The key was making sure the right communication platforms were chosen for the right reasons. The first pillar was authenticity, with Heineken feeling the need to evolve the brand to focus on real stories. The second is transcendence, which seems to ensure that the brand means something to more people. And the third is the long-term management of the brand to see a steady increase in the quality and quantity of job applicants...

“We are a marketing-based company...whereas the drive to evolve the brand and campaign came from HR in an effort to keep it 'fresh and relevant'. This involved working closely between the marketing team and HR...Good employer branding is about the collaboration of different departments and functions...We can learn a lot from each other.” The principal also stressed that raising awareness is just the beginning, as Heineken is also looking at how it can improve its interview process, recruitment process, performance management and more. To do this, it developed a new interactive website.

The head of the company under study continued, stating that “...Heineken's employer, product and corporate brands are the three sides of the same triangle...employer branding must project the same spirit, style and curiosity that runs through the advertising of our products and our corporate communications”. (Randstad, 2020). He further argued that “...the common thread is a willingness to embrace new ideas, and to try to be great rather than just good... We probably want to attract people who want to do the extra mile. And we provide the scope for people to do that in areas ranging from the ingenuity of our marketing to the opportunity to develop great new beers or experience so many different cultures. From a recruiting and employer branding

perspective, potential recruits see in the media that we are a growing company with an ambitious strategy and want to be part of it. Similarly, people see how we are constantly trying to break new ground in our marketing campaigns and say to themselves "this is a company where I can do new and innovative things".

In the same context, he stated that "...we want our employer brand exposure to impress people in the same way as our product advertising. While creative, the way we project our employer brand is rooted in our DNA as a company, seeking to articulate our values and communicate our employee value proposition. When developing the above we spoke to the employees from across the organization about what they see as the company's defining characteristics. Three words emerged from these conversations - adventure, friends and fame. But what we really mean by fame in employer branding is the opportunity to do something remarkable. We have a saying at Heineken: "Pioneers build legacies" (randstad, 2020).

### **5. Conclusions/ Suggestions**

The company under study is a strong case of demonstrating optimal employer branding. It shows how an organization can present its values, culture and its way of thinking in a unique way. This can be done authentically, distinctively, using humor, color (in the case of the famous related ad), creativity and demonstrating a spirit of openness.

Something that can be concluded is the following - campaigns and efforts to strengthen the employer brand, should be based on the authentic communication of the exclusive characteristics of the organizations.

Being honest and simply quoting facts may not be as impactful (depending on the industry always). The organization managed through the campaign to communicate extremely important elements of its culture - support for creativity and employees, thrive for continuous development, support of new ideas, persistence, curiosity, innovation, commitment to those that really want to take the extra mile etc. At the same time, the organization created a brand personality, which is approachable, pleasant and fun, while at the same time it is extremely serious and ambitious (serious but also playful), optimistic and "open".

It is important to emphasize that the marketing and HR departments of the organization worked together harmoniously to achieve such a good result, while a long-term perspective was adopted. In line with the theoretical overview, Heineken's campaign focused on authenticity and distinctiveness by citing real stories of employees. In addition, the CEO seemed to have a deep understanding of the concepts of branding and employer branding, which is probably not common. Organizations (especially SMEs), need to understand the importance of the concept and start getting serious about producing clarifications and understandings. They should collect real data about what differentiates the work experience in their organization and communicate it in the right ways, in the right media. At the same time, they must not forget that the best ambassadors are existing employees. Their satisfaction is paramount to attracting qualified future candidates through their testimonials and feedback.

### **6. Epilogue**

It is very important to understand that the concept of employer brand tends to be identified with the attraction and retention of talent (in the context of the war for talents/talent management) (for example Slavkovic et al., 2019). The concept under study, as highlighted, aims to

effectively communicate an overall work experience, which may have different and exceptional characteristics compared to the competition. Therefore, it is important to clarify the final goal of the above communication - is it simply the attraction and retention of talented employees or the corresponding attraction of the right people?

Talent management has been systematically criticized (for example Lewis & Heckman, 2006) as (among other things) it can focus on individual abilities and talents, while there is no conceptual convergence regarding the definition of talent. The above may be based on positivism (research philosophy), where it is assumed that an individual's contribution to an organization can be isolated, predicted and measured/assessed. Obviously, attracting people with skills, creativity, etc. is extremely important, but the perspective of collective osmosis, friction, exchange of knowledge, reproduction of insights, etc., within organizations should not be overlooked.

The separation of knowledge into explicit (which can be expressed mathematically, stored, etc.) and tacit, which is based more on human interactions, relationships, observation, is completely absent (Nonaka, 1994) in the above context. Employees are not just talents, who perform to the best of their abilities, if organizations implement specialized policies to attract and retain them, but members of a whole, where they come into daily contact with other people, ideas, perspectives, backgrounds, etc.

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